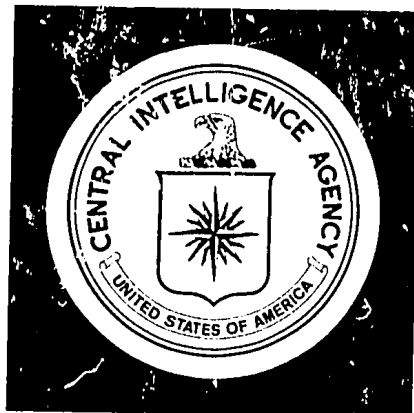


Approved For Release 25X1
2008/11/03 :
CIA-RDP85T00875R001000090

De

Approved For Release
2008/11/03 :
CIA-RDP85T00875R001000090
completed

Top Secret



DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

25X1

25X1

Developments in Indochina

Dec 21 11 21 AM '72

State Dept. review completed

25X1

Top Secret

125

20 December 1972

25X1

Page Denied

25X1

DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA

(Information as of 1500)

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Peking has issued a restrained Foreign Ministry statement on Vietnam. Moscow's protest over bomb damage to a Soviet ship in Haiphong is fairly routine, and US contacts with Soviet officials in Moscow remain cordial.

LAOS

The government continues to gain in the south.

SOUTH VIETNAM

President Thieu has selected the leadership for his New Democracy Party.

20 December 1972

25X1

25X1

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

A Foreign Ministry statement on 20 December provided Peking's initial authoritative reaction to renewed US bombing of North Vietnam and the impasse at the Paris negotiations--basically a mild restatement of long-standing Chinese views.

In the only portion of the statement that uses harsh rhetoric, the Foreign Ministry says that the "Chinese Government and people express their utmost indignation at and strongly condemn" the bombing, which it calls "a most serious step," an "act of aggression" and a "new barbarous crime." Stronger rhetoric was used when the bombing was resumed last May. Peking also says that US attempts to bomb Hanoi into submission are in vain because of Vietnamese fortitude, and asserts that the US "must" stop its military activity in both Vietnams and "speedily" sign the agreement drafted in October to bring the war to an end. This has been the standard Chinese line since 26 October.

Taken as a whole, the statement appears to represent little more than the minimum that Peking can safely say at high levels, under the circumstances. Nowhere in the statement, for instance, does Peking register alarm above its prospects of an eventual agreement or hint that the turn of events has wider implications for Chinese policy in Southeast Asia or elsewhere. Nor does Peking express explicit backing of Vietnamese Communist terms for an agreement, or pledge stepped-up Chinese political and military support for Hanoi, even though a North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry statement issued on 19 December specifically asks for the latter from Hanoi's friends. With respect to prospects for an agreement, the Foreign Ministry says the bombing creates a new "obstacle"--a far cry from high-level statements seven weeks ago in which Peking hinted that Washington's refusal to sign the draft agreement imperiled an early settlement. The Chinese repeat their charge that US attempts to revise basic portions of the draft agreement are to blame for delays in a final accord, but

20 December 1972

-1-

25X1

25X1

[redacted]

the Foreign Ministry statement does so in crisp, straightforward language, devoid of polemics. Lower-level statements out of Peking--a New China News Agency commentary, a rebroadcast of Hanoi's Foreign Ministry statement, and NCNA pick-ups of American press comment--strike a slightly tougher note than the Chinese Foreign Ministry statement. This almost certainly is meant by Peking to assuage the North Vietnamese. All in all, it seems clear from their public stance so far that the Chinese do not feel that recent events will force them to change their course with respect to the war and post-war relationships.

25X1

Moscow Also Reacts With Caution

The Soviet Foreign Ministry gave the US Embassy a brief pro forma protest note on 20 December, charging that the Soviet merchant ship Michurin was damaged on 18 December during US air raids on Haiphong. The note is apparently designed to make the incident a matter of record. It condemns the "criminal act" against the vessel and routinely warns that the US bears full responsibility for the "possible dangerous consequences of such actions." It charges that the lives of Soviet seamen were endangered, but avoids any suggestion that casualties occurred.

25X1

[redacted]

After handling over the protest, the Soviet Foreign Ministry official called attention to the damage and casualties sustained by a Polish merchant ship on 19 December and noted that it was moored close to the Michurin. He stressed that the USSR expects the US to take action to prevent further incidents.

20 December 1972

25X1

[REDACTED]

The Soviets did not say if they would publicize their protest on the Michurin incident. They normally have done so, but the most recent similar protest last May was not publicized.

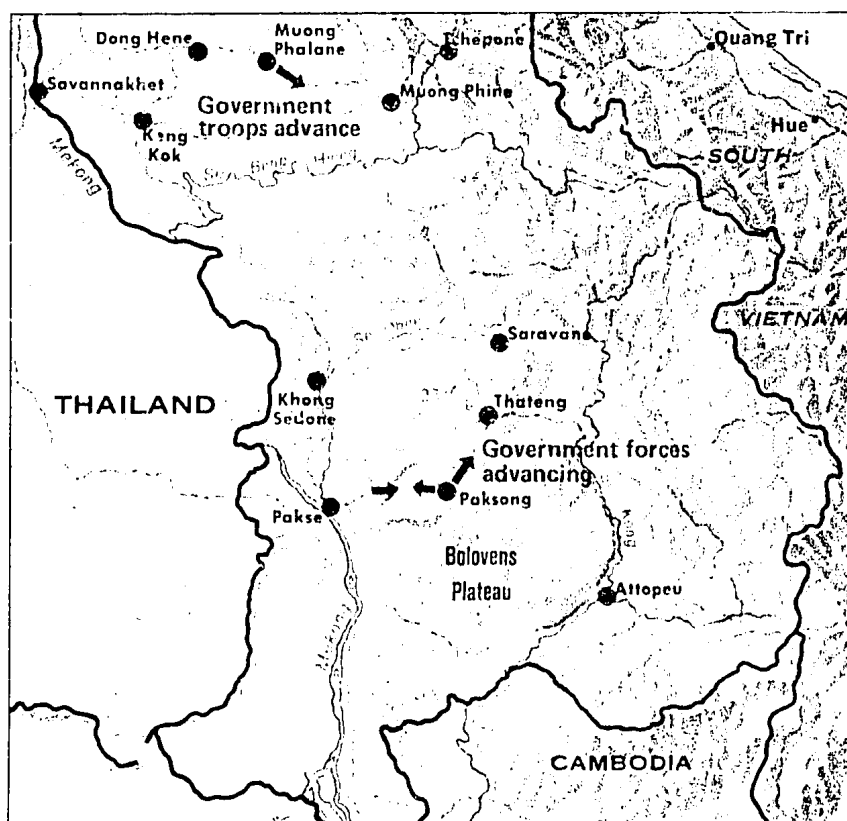
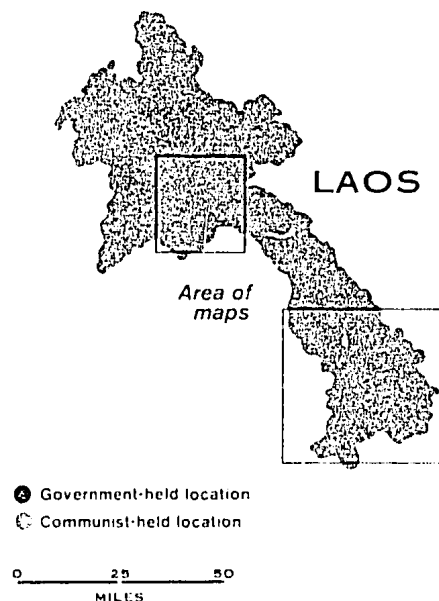
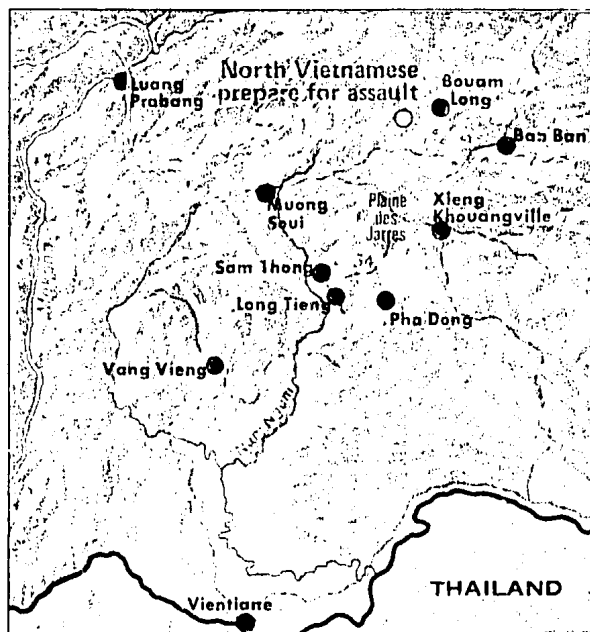
Soviet media continue to reflect the cautious tone of the TASS statement on 19 December, and avoid specific pledges of Soviet assistance for the North Vietnamese. In addition, the US Embassy reports that contacts with Soviet officials remain cordial. A reception hosted by the Foreign Ministry to show a film on President Nixon's visit to the USSR was held on 19 December, and the atmosphere was unaffected by developments in Vietnam.

On the anniversary of the National Liberation Front today, a routine message signed by Soviet leaders included standard pledges of support, but Moscow's restrained reaction to the renewed air attacks falls well short of what the Vietnamese Communists want. This was suggested by PRC Foreign Minister Binh's gratuitous remark yesterday in Paris that "the Soviet Government...must condemn vigorously" the US bombing. Madame Binh arrived in Moscow today to attend the USSR's 50th anniversary observances. Two high North Vietnamese officials are already there, and they will undoubtedly press the Soviet leaders for stronger expressions of support and increased aid.

[REDACTED]

25X1

20 December 1972



25X1

25X1

LAOS

In the South, the government continues to force the military pace. Four government battalions are pushing west from Paksong to link up with other irregular troops attempting to move forward from the western edge of the Bolovens Plateau. Another four-battalion irregular force is moving north from Paksong to clear enemy forces from the northern sector of the Plateau. Only three infantry battalions of the North Vietnamese 968th Division remain on the Bolovens and these are hampered by supply shortages and other problems. In the central panhandle, irregular forces are pursuing the North Vietnamese 29th Independent Regiment, which is withdrawing to the south and east after staging an unsuccessful defense of the village of Muong Phalane.

Government gains in this area could prove ephemeral. Substantial numbers of replacement troops and material are on their way to Communist units in the south, but several weeks of reorganizing and refitting will be necessary before the Communists will be ready for new offensive operations.

Combat remains at a relatively low level in the north as the Communists continue preparations for an assault on Bouam Long.

25X1

20 December 1972

-4-

25X1

25X1

SOUTH VIETNAM

The leadership for President Thieu's new party has been selected and will be publicly announced sometime soon.

25X1

25X1

Most of the persons who reportedly will head the new organization are firm supporters of President Thieu. Several have been rumored in the past to be in line for some of the party's top administrative positions.

25X1

No date apparently has yet been set for a public announcement of the party's official leadership. New provincial chapters of the party are being opened almost on a daily basis this month, and it is possible that the announcement will be made at one of these ceremonies. A more likely occasion may be the Democracy Party national convention, which reportedly is scheduled to be held in Saigon in February.

25X1

25X1

20 December 1972

25X1